



## NEWS RELEASE

### **USDA Forest Service**

Rocky Mountain Region

740 Simms Street Golden, CO 80401

**Contact:** Steve Segin, 303-275-5346

### **Wyoming State Forestry Division**

1100 W 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue

Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

**Contact:** Cathy Lujan, 307-777-8510

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## **U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND WYOMING STATE FORESTRY DIVISION ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF FOREST HEALTH SURVEY**

**CHEYENNE, Wyo., Feb 9, 2012** — The U.S. Forest Service and Wyoming State Forestry Division announced today the results of the annual aerial [survey](#) for Wyoming. The most significant forest health concern continues to be the spread of mountain pine beetle activity. An additional 167,000 acres of tree mortality were detected in 2011 across the state. This brings the total number of acres of infestation to 3.3 million in Wyoming since the first signs of outbreak in 1996.

The mountain pine beetle epidemic on the Medicine Bow National Forest and adjacent private forest lands near Laramie and on the Laramie Range near Casper expanded onto 68,000 acres where damage had not been observed previously. Within this area of Wyoming 879,000 acres have been affected by mountain pine beetle since 1996. Mountain pine beetle activity detected in 2011 increased from 2010 levels by over 1,000 acres in northeastern Wyoming's Black Hills with new tree mortality detected on 1,300 acres in Crook County in 2011. The epidemic affected 66,000 acres of the Black Hills in neighboring South Dakota. In western Wyoming's forests from the Montana border south to I-80, ongoing mountain pine beetle epidemics expanded onto 97,000 acres not previously affected and has now impacted nearly 2.2 million acres since 1996. New tree mortality caused by mountain pine beetle was detected on 28,000 acres in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks in 2011. Pine forests on the Bighorn National Forest showed the lowest levels of mountain pine beetle activity in Wyoming's National Forests.

"Protecting the public, our employees and critical infrastructure remains the highest priority for the U.S. Forest Service," said Maribeth Gustafson, acting regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region. "Our efforts are making a big difference on the ground, but there is still a lot of work to be done."

Other significant information learned from the survey includes spruce bark beetle findings. The spruce beetle epidemic has killed extensive areas of spruce and continues spreading especially in the Absaroka Mountains in northwestern Wyoming, as well as the Sierra Madre, Snowy Range, and Medicine Bow Mountains in southeastern Wyoming.

"Our actions today and in years to come will shape the forest of the future" said Bill Crapser, Wyoming state forester. "Active forest management on both public and private lands can lead to healthier trees on the landscape and create the diversity necessary to reduce future large-scale insect epidemics. If we don't plan now for future management of these forests, we will set the stage for another mass disturbance like the current bark beetle epidemic."

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